

PSI Utilities network

PSI's utilities network has been created and affiliates are welcome to join the online conference. The major themes covered are energy regulation, outsourcing and water privatisation. If you want to inform others about what's happening in your country, or if you want advice and information on how to deal with a particular situation, join the network! For more information, email networking@world-psi.org.

Job quality and the union movement

Many trade unions have adopted the concept of 'job quality' as part of their work, combining the traditional collective bargaining agenda with a new emphasis on job design, work organisation, skills and career development. They argue that quality jobs are not an end in themselves, but are vital for the achievement of quality public services. A shortened version of this article, in which PSI considers the pros and cons of the notion of job quality from a union perspective, will appear in the next edition of FOCUS. The complete article is already available on the PSI website www.world-psi.org/jobquality.

Building union solidarity

PSI has developed new web pages outlining our international solidarity work. They are available here: <http://www.world-psi.org/solidarity> in English, with French and Spanish equivalents under development. A list and summary of PSI projects around the world is also available here: <http://www.world-psi.org/projects>

Fighting corruption in the Philippines

An interview with Annie Geron, PSI Vice-President, and General Secretary of PSI affiliate in the Philippines PSLINK, in which she tells the story of her fight against corruption, mentioned in the September edition of the World News, is now available on the PSI website. Annie explains how PSLINK filed a complaint against the Director General of Annie's workplace who was involved in trafficking of young Filipino women and misuse of public funds. Read the story on www.world-psi.org/content1.

Welcome Thembi!

PSI has a new Sub-regional secretary for Southern Africa. Thembi Mngomezulu was recently appointed and will be working in the PSI office in South Africa. Thembi was previously the deputy director of the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA) and their chief negotiator, so she has a wealth of trade union experience. We welcome Thembi among the PSI staff.

Australian unions rally in mass against proposed changes to labour law

Despite threats and intimidation from their bosses, more than 500,000 Australian workers took to the streets on 15 November to protest the government's proposed workplace reforms. Teachers, civil servants and firefighters were joined by religious groups and other campaigners. In Melbourne, around 200,000 people gathered to make their feelings known. The new laws aim to cut the power of trade unions in favour of individual contracts. They will also make it easier for employers to sack workers. Australian unions have declared that they will continue to campaign and will highlight every time a worker is worse off because of the new laws. For further information see www.rightsatwork.com.au. PSI affiliates have been sending protest letters to the Australian government.

Femme globale

Wendy Caird spoke at the "Femme globale" session of the Helsinki Conference on Mobilising Political Will in September. Wendy spoke of the specific case of women and girls faced with globalisation. The statistics she lists are a stark reminder of the state of the world and how vital it is to tackle poverty. The transcript of Wendy's speech is on www.world-psi.org/FemmeGlobale.

To view the 20-minute video click here: www.world-psi.org/video/femme_globale.wmv.

Getting ready for Whiteband Day III

Whiteband Day III is planned for December 10, which is just before the 6th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong (13-18 December) and the same day as International Human Rights Day. Your involvement in the week of activities around this day can help convince governments to support the call for decent work and trade justice so that millions of people can have the chance to break the poverty cycle.

The theme of WBIII is "Spotlight on trade injustice". Mobilise your trade union members to:

- Wear white bands
- Distribute white bands and leaflets to workers at or near the workplace
- Organise/take part in rallies and marches calling for decent work for all workers, trade justice and union rights for all
- Cover significant buildings and trade union offices in your city with white bands.

Many actions are already planned for the week of December 5 to 11. See www.whiteband.org.

International Day of Disabled Persons

The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons, 3 December, aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilise support for the dignity, rights and well being of persons with disabilities. A major focus of the Day is practical action to further implement international norms and standards concerning persons with disabilities and to further their participation in social life and development on the basis of equality. On this day PSI calls on its

members to take action for social justice and quality public services by putting pressure on employers to recruit more disabled workers and make the necessary adjustments to ensure access to workplace and public services for workers and users with disability.

The relative efficiency of public and private sector water

It is widely assumed that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector. However, this new paper from the **Public Services International Research Unit** presents evidence showing that there is no systematic significant difference between public and private operators in terms of efficiency or other performance measures. The six-page document can be downloaded from www.world-psi.org/water

New Corruption Perceptions index

Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) offers some thought-provoking facts about the state of corruption in 159 countries. More than two-thirds of them scored less than 5 out of 10, indicating serious levels of corruption in most of the countries surveyed. Seventy countries scored less than 3 on the CPI, indicating a severe corruption problem. Nineteen of the world's poorest countries have been granted debt service relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, but not one of those countries scored above 4 on the CPI, indicating serious to severe levels of corruption. The commitment and resources devoted to qualifying for HIPC must also be applied to winning the fight against corruption. However, wealth is not a prerequisite for successful control of corruption. For some higher income countries, there has been a marked increase in the perception of corruption over the past ten years, showing that even wealthy, high-scoring countries must work to maintain a climate of integrity. See www.transparency.org.

Stop the WTO negotiations! Save jobs!

PSI, trade unions and NGOs are concerned that the WTO negotiations, to be pursued at the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference in December, will have a massive impact on employment in the agricultural, industrial, fisheries, forestry and services sectors. Please read the statement on www.world-psi.org/wtoandjobs and, if your organisation (not individuals, please) wants to sign on to it, send a message to Mike.Waghorne@world-psi.org and Violaine.Roggeri@world-psi.org with the full name of your organisation. The statement will then be sent to all WTO member states, as well as to the national and international news media. Please send us signatures before the evening of

November 24th 2005. Once the WTO ministerial text comes out, we will hold a press conference in Geneva. If you have signed on to the statement, you may also wish to send a copy to your trade, labour, and agriculture ministers and parliamentarians, and to promote the issue through your local media. In Hong Kong PSI will hold a joint press conference with persons from key constituencies to present our critique and the statement. Furthermore, we will be collecting case studies of the impacts of trade liberalisation on livelihoods, employment and degradation of work for people to use in their media work.

PSI and NGOs present alternatives to water privatisation

PSI is working with its affiliated unions, NGOs and other groups to advance public-public partnerships in the water and sanitation sector. Given the massive and ongoing failures of private, for-profit management, new policies are urgently needed. While the World Bank and donor countries continue to search for market-based mechanisms, PSI and a number of NGOs advocate the responsibility of governments to provide water and sanitation services to all. PSI will advance this agenda at the World Water Forum in Mexico City, 16-22 March 2006. We will be contacting unions who can bring concrete examples of strong public management and labour management cooperation.

Schwarzenegger beaten by the unions

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger suffered a massive setback in an election held early November when voters rejected four referendum measures on which he had staked his reputation.

Unions campaigned aggressively against Schwarzenegger's Propositions 74, 75, 76 and 77. The measures would have extended probation for teachers, restricted union political fundraising, given the governor more power over the budget, and taken "redistricting" out of the hands of elected officials.

Managing retrenchment

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private-sector lending arm of the World Bank, has produced a Good Practice Note on Managing Retrenchment as part of the process for implementing IFC's new social and environmental performance standards (see the October issue of the World News). The Note replaces the World Bank's earlier "Toolkit: Labor Issues in Infrastructure Reform" and has a stronger message on the importance of consulting with unions and abiding by ILO standards and OECD guidelines. These are all issues on which the ICFTU/Global Unions suggested that the Bank and IFC improve on the earlier publication. It is refreshing to read some of the recommendations, which include consulting trade unions and looking for alternative solutions to retrenchment. You can read the document on <http://www.ifc.org/enviro>. If your union wishes to submit comments or recommendations, send them to communications@world-psi.org.

Trade union membership in Europe

The European industrial relations observatory has published an interesting study on trade union membership in Europe. The study covers 26 European countries for the period 1993-2003. It looks at the number of trade union members, the relative size of the main organisations and the breakdown of membership by gender, as well as the problems of assessing union density. See www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/2004/03/update/tn0403105u.html

Labour and the environment

The first global Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment will take place at the Kenyan headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 15-17 January 2006. The Assembly will also be known as WILL 2006 because, at the event, trade unions will be launching their Workers' Initiatives for a Lasting Legacy. Debates and recommendations at the Assembly will cover issues ranging from the implications of global climate change for the world of work and the prevention of hazardous chemicals in the workplace up to occupational, public and environmental health, trade unions actions for equal and sustainable access and management to

resources and services and trade unions and worker participation in environmental governance, and corporate social responsibility and accountability.
For more information see www.will2006.org.

Country profiles on sustainable development

The UN Division for sustainable development has created a website with country profiles for 2004, 2005 and 2006. The profiles evaluate government and company performance related to asbestos, climate and energy, HIV/AIDS, occupational health and safety, trade union rights and corporate responsibility issues. See www.un.org/esa/sustdev/mgroups/tu_cprofiles

The profiles will be used as resource material at the Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment (see above).

Thought of the day

The loss of human resources through migration is compromising the capacity of health systems in the developing world. Africa is a double loser in this equation. In Britain, one child in every 150 dies before the age of five. Britain saves 117 million dollars in training costs by recruiting doctors from Ghana, where one child in 10 dies before the age of five. Ghana also loses 63 million dollars of its investment in training health professionals. Britain's average per capita spending on health is 1,668 dollars, whereas Ghana's is 11 dollars.

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